

## City to crack down on heavy-trash early birds 300 workers will be ticketing those who put out rubbish too soon

By RON NISSIMOV  
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Residents who place heavy trash on their curbsides too early can expect some unwanted visits from city officials. The city plans to deputize 300 civilian employees in the near future to allow them to issue tickets as part of an effort to get tough on violators, officials said Wednesday.

"What's one person's heavy trash is another person's eyesore," Mayor Bill White said. White said he would institute a "zero tolerance" policy by issuing citations to violators instead of giving warnings, but the official in charge of enforcement said this would not necessarily mean that all violators would be cited.

Houston Police Department Assistant Chief Brian Lumpkin, who heads the mayor's newly created neighborhood protection division, said the new policy will likely result in more citations. He added that inspectors and officers will try to resolve problems over early placement of heavy trash before issuing citations.

"We don't want to throw out common sense with zero tolerance," Lumpkin said. "If an elderly person has heavy trash out too early because the lawn man put it there, we'll probably ask a neighbor to help out. But ultimately, the homeowner is responsible. "Now, most violators are given warnings, and the city issues some citations to repeat offenders.

Lumpkin said placing heavy trash out too early encourages people to illegally dump refuse on neighborhood curbsides. Violators can be fined from \$50 to \$2,000, depending on whether they are repeat offenders.

The city picks up heavy trash once a month, with fixed dates in specific neighborhoods. Lumpkin said it is a violation to place heavy trash out before 6 p.m. on the Friday before the next weekday's scheduled pickup. This gives all residents the chance to place heavy trash out on weekends, he said. Lumpkin said he expects City Council to vote on an ordinance to deputize the 300 employees by mid-November. The city's legal department is ironing out the details, he said. He said the city currently relies on HPD officers and 60 inspectors to issue citations.

The announcements were made at a news conference at Tidwell Park to publicize a \$250,000 pilot program — called "Stop Trashing Houston" — to halt illegal dumping. The one-year program, funded by the Houston-Galveston Area Council, will educate citizens about illegal dumping and install 15 cameras in problem areas to catch illegal dumpers.